

# FRYMAN

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE



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AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP

MARGOT MAYO  
LEADER



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## "PROMENADE"

Official organ of the American Square Dance Group  
"The purposes of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with all who entertain similar views." - from A.S.D.G. Constitution.

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with one special summer edition.

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## NEW YEAR....1941

An out-of-town member of the Group wrote in, commending us on our lovely "thirteen page Christmas Card"...meaning, of course, our December issue of "Promenade" ! We don't think he meant to, but he gave us an idea !!

Therefore, this issue will be a New Years greeting from the American Square Dance Group. Usually we are so busy, in "Promenade" telling about the work others are doing in the folk field, that we completely forget to tell about our own work, and people are too frequently asking us "when and where ?"

So, we will follow that old tradition, and check up on ourselves and make a few, no, not resolutions, but simply plans for the future of our Group.

Last year saw us, for the first time, established in a "home of our own" and this fall we moved into a larger home. Even in our new studio, it was too crowded for comfort at our "open house parties" and now we are once again "just lookin' for a home" which will be large enough and convenient enough to suit at least a majority of our friends !

Then, this year has seen the development of a long-dreamed-of project, a Group magazine ! When we bought our own mimeograph machine last year, "Promenade" became a reality and we have loved it and cherished it, and had a tremendous amount of fun with it. We think you like it too, according to the response it has received, but we do hope that during the coming year, more people will subscribe to it, for it is rather difficult keeping track of those who buy each issue separately and who are hurt if we don't have enough copies for them.

Yes, it has been a good year, and even with the difficulties and and disappointments that go along with life, we still keep our fingers crossed and hope that we can bring a little joy into a world that is none too happy these days !



## HAPPY NEW YEAR



This year just past, has meant a great deal to us, but since others have not been able to share our experiences with us, we thought you might be interested in our activities.

During the year 1940, which, in our work means January to June, and from September to January, the American Square Dance Group has given thirty performances, demonstrations ! Seventeen "open house parties" of the adult Group, one open house party given by the Juniors so far ! Thirty-five teaching appearances by individual members of the Group who are "leaders". And, during the summer months, representatives of the Group taught folk dancing in five camps. (Four of us together in one camp, two at another, and so on.)

Our performances, which usually include teaching our audience to folk dance, ranged from an appearance at the Okie Benefit at the Forrest Theater, to evenings at church socials. From repeat engagements at places like the "Plum Point Hotel", (where we seem to congregate on holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and a future engagement for Easter !) to appearing at the Waldorf on New Years Eve. From the World's Fair to Harry Bannister's Music Hall. Certainly one can't complain that we have no variety !

Our membership has doubled during this year, and our activities grown. We are now starting a folk chorus, and have already begun rehearsals of our band, consisting of fiddle, five string banjo, harmonica, accordion and guitars !

Our members have scattered to all corners of the States, and are carrying the work in their communities, from Oregon to Washington D.C., from Minnesota and Wisconsin to Connecticut.

This year has also seen the development of our Group magazine "Promenade", which has also gone out into the world to help those interested in folk culture, from California to Massachusetts.

And we've had fun too !

We hope that this coming year will see us growing even more, and that you will enjoy a "folk life" as happy and complete as ours!

## "Banjo Picker in Kentucky"

by Pete Seeger

When in Kentucky, I dropped in to see Rufus Crisp, Margot's banjo-playing cousin. You've seen a good many songs Margot learned from him printed in "Promenade", so maybe you'd like to know about my visit.

Allen, Kentucky, where he lives, is a little cluster of houses around a fork in the roads, about a hundred miles north of "Bloody" Harlan County, in the extreme eastern part of the state. A small boy there told me, "Rufus Crisp ?....he lives over that-a-way, near the new school....Yup, he does play the banjo. Purty good too."

"So you're a friend of cousin Margie's ! Well come right in; I'll call Rufus !", said Mrs. Crisp, and then she opened the door wide.

Rufus was a short, stocky man, getting on in years, but there was a twinkle in his eyes, and he had a huge walrus mustache that must have been envied for miles around when he was a young blade . I explained that I was just passing by, and was just stopping for a moment, but I played the banjo a bit myself, and would like very much to hear him play, if I could.

"Why, now, I haven't played very much the last few years.... let's see your banjo....hmm....you got a fret on yours. I don't like 'em, myself. I filed all of 'em off my banjo...you get better tone that way." So Rufus went into the next room and brought out his own instrument.

I couldn't begin to remember all the tunes he played. "Shady Grove, "Roll on, John", "Cripple Creek" and among others that old hymn, "Will the Circle be Unbroken ?". Often he would play a tune I thought I knew, and when he told me the name, I wouldn't recognize it. (This variation in titles is pretty common; a tune I heard near Atlanta as "High sheriffin Georgia", I heard called "Miss Betty Ann Brown" in Missouri !) It was a fine thing to watch his fingers fly, the strings ring out, and his mustache wiggled a bit as he leaned back and sang out the verses.

"When cousin Margie was here, she wrote down a lot of these songs, and you ought to be able to learn them from her", Rufus told me. I was just about to leave, but they insisted I stay for dinner. Man alive, I'm telling you, it was a feast. Three kinds of potatoes, turnip greens, hot cornbread, hot biscuits, gravy, buttermilk, fried pork, and best of all, fried apples. Also pie and cake for dessert.....

"We've got a son just about your age", Mrs. Crisp told me, "and we'd like folks to treat him well sometimes when he's out on the road, just like you are."

"Well, come around again", said Rufus, as I was leaving. "If you're ever near here, drop in, and we'll play the banjo some more".

So I walked down the road and over the railroad bridge and caught a lift for Pikeville.





## "BACK WHERE I COME FROM"

If I may, I'd like to put in a plug here on the advantages of getting out into the countryside and among the people. East, west, south, north --- away from the city of New York and its satellites, away out where the folks don't think very often about New York and when they do, not much.

You sure can learn a lot. Round about a year ago I first took it into my head to try to learn to play the five string banjo. I couldn't find anybody in this part of the country who knew how to play one, so I listened to phonograph records. It wasn't enough, though. The music went too fast, and traced too intricate a pattern. I really didn't really get the hang of the instrument till I left the city and started knocking around, mainly down south, watching other folks play, and playing along with them.

If you play an instrument why don't you try this and start traveling yourself someday? Take along your music box and start off by the thumb route --- hitch-hiking. Or you can ride the side-door Pullman, or you can, if you care, ride in style behind the wheel of an automobile. Sing and swap songs wherever you go. If you know the right kind of songs to sing, sing in churches, or saloons, or union halls, or gas stations, juke joints, or just along the sidewalk on Saturday nights. Maybe some hot evening you will be walking down a dusty road, cursing under your breath, and some fellow on his porch will holler out like this:

"Hey you! What kind of a git-fiddle you carryin' there? Stop and play us a tune!"

Well, maybe after a little coaxing you sit down for a while and perhaps after a little bit he'll allow as he has a guitar himself in the house, and how about playing a tune together? So maybe after a little you've both learned some new songs, and maybe he asks you to stay over-night and for breakfast, too. (Free meals don't always come this easy.)

I was loafing one day last October outside a W.P.A. warehouse in Jasper, Alabama, where they were handing out surplus commodities to relievers. Strumming a few tunes, and generally wasting time, I noticed one old fellow's hands twitching as he watched me, so I asked him if he could pick a banjo.

"Hell, no, Sonny," says he, "I can't even pick cotton 'nough to make a living at it."

But I figured he was just modest, which is the correct way to be, so I started playing worse and worse myself, and finally I persuaded him to take over. He said, "Lord, I haven't touched one of these things in nigh on ten years." Well, I'm telling you, he could play. Didn't know very many tunes, but knew those well, and I learned a lot from him.

As people in the cities become increasingly conscious of the wealth of American folk music --- and dancing too --- I think one of the most important things is to see that they get a true picture of it. Long-hair musicians, for example, for the most part think of folk music as something esoteric, quaint, picturesque --- an isolated phenomenon which they can't connect with the main cultural pattern of our country.

Therefore one of the swellest things about the American Square Dance Group is the way the members have gone out to country dances wherever they can, in New York State, Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, and so on, and have copied down the calls and figures to bring back with them.

Trusting you will keep up the good work, Yours,

Peter Seeger

## DIALS AND DISCS

There are several records released by Victor, which we should like to review, keeping in mind the plight of those lost souls who love to square dance and have no music available.

MONEY MUSK...Victor, 19964 A....Henry Ford's Old Time Orch.

For a record with calls, this recording of Money Musk is particularly good, since the calls are distinct, and timed so as to allow for actual dancing! Although you may not care for the precise enunciation of the caller, since it is more on the style of a "dancing master" than a country square dance caller, still, it does add to the value of the record for dancing even though it thereby loses a little flavor. One of the best records so far for actual dancing, but good only for the particular version of Money Musk. Be sure you know the dance before attempting to dance to recorded music, however!

MEDLEY OF REELS...Victor, 19964 B....Henry Ford's Old Time Orchestra.

An excellent record for dancing, since the music is of the best, and there are no calls to interfere with the directions of your own caller. The music is suitable particularly for square sets, although it could also be used for running sets if the need arose.

CUCKOO WALTZ...Victor 20253 A...International Novelty Quart.

This is a charming waltz, very typical of the music of the latter part of the last century and the earlier part of this. The strongly accented beats lend a kind of Tyrolean air to the music, and altogether it is a pleasant record to listen to, or to dance to.

LENA SCHOTTISCHE...Victor 20253 B...International Novelty Quartette.

Also a pleasant piece of music, very danceable, and so accented as to make the teaching of a schottische very simple.





# DIALS AND DISCS...continued

|           |            |      |                          |
|-----------|------------|------|--------------------------|
| Sunday    | 9:30 A.M.  | WABC | Wings over Jordan        |
|           | 11:30 A.M. | WNYC | Sheep and Goats          |
|           | 11:30 A.M. | WNYC | Prof. Mitchell & Consort |
|           | 1:30 P.M.  | WJZ  | Josef Marais             |
|           | 2:30 P.M.  | WABC | Flow Gently Sweet Rhythm |
| Monday    | 10:30 P.M. | WABC | Back Where I Come From   |
| Tuesday   | 9:15 A.M.  | WABC | Wellsprings of Music     |
|           | 4:30 P.M.  | WNYC | Adventures in Music      |
| Wednesday | 10:30 P.M. | WABC | Back Where I Come From   |
| Thursday  | 1:15 P.M.  | WNYC | Leadbelly                |
| Friday    | 3:30 P.M.  | WQXR | American Concert         |
|           | 10:30 P.M. | WABC | Back Where I Come From   |
| Saturday  | 9:15 A.M.  | WABC | Burl Ives                |
|           | 10:00 P.M. | WMCA | Promenade All            |

## WNYC Folk Festival



Between the 12th and 22nd of February, Station WNYC will feature a pageant of American folk programs, which will reach every nook and cranny of the American Folk world. Miss Yurchenco, who has been doing a splendid job in arranging folk programs over WNYC in the past, is planning to present all the folk artists available. Huddie Leadbelly, Woodie Guthrie, Burl Ives, the Golden Gate Quartet, Aunt Molly Jackson, Tony Kraber and Will Geer are only a few of the many

names appearing. Surely this is what the folk world has been looking forward to for a long time !!

And more than that, the American Square Dance Group is anxious to see the folk festival of the air get off to a good start. So anxious, in fact, that Miss Yurchenco has agreed to let the A.S.D.G. sponsor a half hour program on Thursday, Feb. 13th at 4:00 P.M. John and Lucy Allison and Peter Seeger will be participating Group members. Manny Weiner will call two square dances, Margot will sing two less known folk songs and the Group orchestra, consisting of harmonica, five string banjo, guitar, accordeon and fiddle, will play two square dance tunes.

Peter Seeger, on his short stay in New York City will be heard on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights at 10:30 P.M. over WABC. Unfortunately, however, his appearances are not regularly scheduled.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE COUNTRY DANCE BOOK

by

Beth Tolman and Ralph Page  
Countryman Press, Inc.

Although this book was published several years ago, it is still one of the outstanding contributions to the field of published folk material. For its illustrations and written matter alone, aside from the directions for dances, this book is a joy forever. Its illustrations are charming and unusual, showing many of the dance figures as seen from above, and thereby giving a suprisingly clear idea of how the figures are executed. F.W.P. Tolman, the artist, has a wonderful understanding of the "natives" and a sense of humor that is infectious and unoffensive. And the chapters that are devoted to the introduction, calls and conduct, the background of the dances, the contributions of the different nations to our folk heritage, are not only fun to read, but are of great value to anyone interested in American folk material.

The actual dance material is divided into different sections according to the type of dance, such as jigs, quadrilles, grand marches, contrys, rounds and the less vital dances which were combinations of many types.

Music is suggested for each dance, and though the reader sometimes is inclined to ask where the music may be obtained, still one has the feeling that it is not an impossible task to get at the right music for the right dances.

The descriptions of the dances are not always clear unless the reader already has some idea of the particular dance. In this respect, the Country Dance Book is no better or worse than the average book on dancing. For we have yet to discover the ideal book on square dancing !

But it is the background material and the joyous presentation of the whole book which makes this certainly one of the finest books on American folk dancing yet produced. For the book is really good, exciting reading. I advocate it particularly when you are tired and a little discouraged, for just the sight of the pictures makes one smile, and the informal, conversational manner of Beth Tolman is completely disarming.

Highly recommended !!!

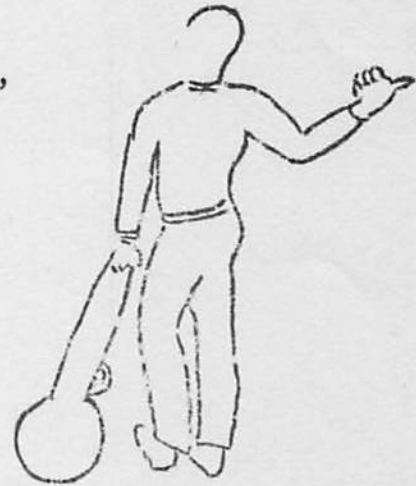
Incidentally, the news reaches us via the 'Country Correspondent', (a haphazard periodical issued by the Countryman Press of Guilford, Vermont) that the Country Dance Book is back at the head of the list in a new edition....for "two bucks". The Countryman Press has taken over from Farrar and Rhinehart all the distribution of the perennial Country Series. There are several of these books published already, besides the book reviewed above. If you are interested in this series, write the Countryman Press, Guilford, Vermont.



## NOTES OF INTEREST

Our meandering member of the A.S.D.G., that traipsin' twanger of the banjo, Pete Seeger, has returned to the fold, at least temporarily.....for one always has the feeling that Pete will be off to some other section of the country, in search of this or that, before you can say, "Earl Robinson !"

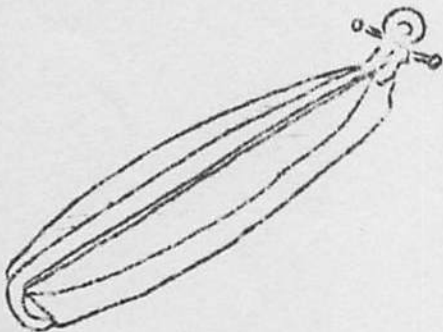
Be sure to see the radio page for his appearances on the "Back Where I Come From" programs.



Did you see the January issue of Friday with the entire article about the Allison's ? Although we don't hold entirely with some of the opinions expressed in the article, still we are happy that Friday is interested in people like John and Lucy Allison, and in their work.

Our thanks to John Martin for the nice things he said about us in the New York Times of Jan. 5th, 1941. We're particularly grateful for his mentioning the drawings. We certainly try to make "Promenade", as he says, "filled to the brim with interesting and useful folk material."

The American Square Dance Group was very proud and happy to have, as guests of honor at the December membership party, the following friends of the Group.....Joseph Marais, John and Lucy Allison, Andrew Rowan Summers and Elie Seigmeister ! The Allison's and Andrew Summers brought along their various instruments and sang for and with us. The rest of the evening was devoted, as is usual in a gathering of more than one member of the A.S.D.G., in dancing, one after the other, all the especially favorite dances and singing all our favorite folk songs.



Incidentally, at the present writing, Andrew Rowan Summers is appearing nightly at Theodore's, 4 East 56th St. from seven 'till eleven. It isn't too expensive, even for folk dancers, and is a pleasant way to hear folk-music.....(although we personally prefer having Mr. Summers at our studio !)

It is indeed a delightful surprise to hear that the Golden Gate Quartet is singing on the President's Inauguration program. When we open our new studio, we're counting on Willie Johnson and the boys to join us again in the Group Party.

We're told that Elie Seigmeister and his group of American Ballad Singers are making an album of American folk songs, covering a wide range.....from Negro spirituals to Kentucky ditties to traditional ballads. Good luck, Elie !